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H. J. Senner
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March - 8 - 1908

Birthday gift
From Edith -

"Fills the valleys with the soft music of his reed."—Page 103.

214.
H.

The Shepherd Song

On the Hills of Lebanon

— Twenty-Third Psalm —

Illustrated and Explained

Rev. Faddoul J. Abghar



New York

F. P. Dutton and Company

37 West Twenty-Third Street

The Shepherd Song

On the Hills of Lebanon

The Twenty-Third Psalm

Illustrated and Explained

By

Rev. Faddoul Moghabghab



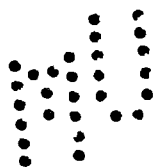
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Shepherd's Psalm
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FOREWORD.

I TAKE great pleasure in adding a brief Foreword to this delightful story that my Syrian guest and brother has written; and which, in God's good hands, must result in bringing an abiding blessing to countless men and women to whom David's shepherd-song has ever been a holy hiding-place.

As one who also has trodden the land concerning which my dear friend the Rev. Faddoul Moghabghab has so refreshingly, so interestingly, and so instructively written in the following pages, I should like to state that very much of what he describes, in

the loved land of his birth and young manhood, my eyes also beheld, as I trod the highways made sacred by the footprints of our blest Redeemer and Lord.

To my mind it was simply wonderful to see how the land and its life—even when seen in these modern times—made luminous and realistic the Bible records. What makes the Bible a book of puzzles to the man of the Occident is his failure to recognize the oft-forgotten fact that it is an Oriental book, written by Orientals to and about Orientals.

Let men of the Occident bear in mind this one fact, and many of the Book's apparent mysteries will become clear as noontide.

It is this fact as seen so clearly in Mr. Moghabghab's story that gives his book its great worth, so that, whenever men read the holy psalm

Foreword

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of the shepherd-king with this new light, it will take on a reality and meaning that otherwise are missing.

REV. HOWARD MUDIE,
Payson Memorial Church,
Portland, Me.

PREFACE.

WHEN I look back to the past fourteen years of my pilgrimage in these United States of America, during which I have given more than five hundred public lectures on this Psalm, I realize that I have made already a host of friends and acquaintances who have heard this Song from my own lips, or have recognized my voice in *The Song of Our Syrian Guest*.

Dear friends, your smiling faces and loving-kindness linger in my memory. In answer to your requests I now send to you my own completed exposition of David's Song, with its Oriental expressions and imagery;

with its help and comfort too, which have been practically tested in my own life as a pilgrim in this land. I have poured my heart and soul into the study of this Psalm and the words of the Good Shepherd in the tenth chapter of St. John ; I have called to my help other Bible references, and added to them my own experience as shepherd ; so a song (if such it may be called) came out, and is here given to you.

Friends, it may be that some of you are strangers and pilgrims, passing through similar experiences to mine, or through dark valleys, sorrow, trouble, poverty, affliction, or even of the shadow of death ; others are lying down in the green pastures and beside the still waters of a life of sunshine. I send to you all this sweetest song of David with its treasures well opened to the reach of your troubled souls, praying most fervently that God may

make it a balsam to your wounds, and
a sweet song of your own life in this
world, so that one and all may be able
to join with David in the chorus,

“The Lord is my shepherd.”

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

THE Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

المزمور الثالث والعشرون

مزمور داود

الرَّبُّ رَبِّيَ فَلَا يَمُوزُنِي شَيْءٌ . فِي مِرَاعٍ حَضَرَ يَوْضُنِي .

إِلَى مِيَاهِ الرَّاحَةِ يُوْرِدُنِي . بِرَدْنَفِي . يَهْدِينِي

إِلَى سُبُلِ الْبَرِّ مِنْ أَجْلِ اسْمِهِ . أَيْضاً إِذَا سَرْتُ فِي

وَادِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا خَافَ شَرّاً لَنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مَعِي

مَعَالِي وَعَمَّا زِلْهَا يَفْزِيَانِي . نَزَبَ قَدَامِي

مَائِدَةً نَجَاهٍ مَضَايِقِي . مَسَحَ بِالذَّهْنِ رَأْسِي .

كَأَسَى رَبّاً . أَنَا غَيْرُ وَرَحْمَةٍ يُسْمَعَانِي كَوَلِّمُ جَانِي

وَأَسْكُنُ فِي بَيْتِ الرَّبِّ مَدَى

الْأَيَّامِ

THE TWENTY THIRD PSALM IN ARABIC
IN HANDWRITING OF THE AUTHOR

The Shepherd Song on the Hills of Lebanon.

I.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

IN order to have a clear understanding of the Twenty-third Psalm, often termed "The Shepherd Psalm," we must first study the life of Oriental shepherds as we see them living it at this day.

The words, shepherd, sheep, lamb, ram, ewe, and sheepfold are used in the Bible about six hundred times; and if we add flock, herd, drove, etc., the number will swell to a thousand. The care of sheep was the occupation of Abraham, Isaac, and their children;

14 The Shepherd Song

therefore prophets and poets refer frequently to shepherds and their life. That life has been considered an honest and honorable one by all the people of God, and is held in high esteem by the Arabs of the desert to this day. As one travels among them he often sees a sheik and the common people leading their flocks side by side to the green pastures.

The occupation is shared by men and women. The women prefer to care for the flocks of young lambs; they are better adapted to that than men are. They lead their flocks not far from the sheepfold; then, before it is very hot, they lead them "beside the still waters" under the shade of rocks and trees. The men prefer to look after the larger sheep and the goats, and usually travel far from the fold. Most shepherds own their flocks; but when a flock numbers more than a hundred they obtain the

The Twenty-third Psalm 15

help of servants, whose pay consists of a tenth of the increase of the flock. In a few years these servants become themselves the owners of flocks. Hirelings are not employed as shepherds except when it is necessary; and then they serve under the direction of shepherds, who always lead the sheep.

The shepherds of Palestine are fed at this day in the same manner as in the Bible times. Abigail's present to David is a good **Bill of Fare** example of a shepherd's ordinary provision: "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs." 1 Sam. xxv. 18. Add to these locusts, eggs, cheese, laban olives, and honey from the rocks, and you will have an almost complete

16 · The Shepherd Song

bill of fare for the shepherd's daily use.

The shepherd of Palestine is a lover of peace. He avoids strife as **No Outside** much as possible, and is **Interests** harmless if let alone. His attention is wholly occupied with the things that concern his sheep. He is not interested in either the political or social affairs of the cities or towns, because his visits to them are infrequent. His time is taken up in caring for his flocks.

When shepherds gather together sociably, near the streams or under the shadow of the great rocks, the conversation is somewhat after this manner: "Friends, I have lost two of my lambs to-day"; or, "I am glad to tell you that I have found the sheep that I lost yesterday"; or, "The other day I had a very hard time in keeping the wolves from my flock." Such subjects as pastures,

The Twenty-third Psalm 17

streams of water, enemies of the flock, butter, olive oil, cedar tar, diseases of the sheep and their remedies, the prices of wool and mutton in the market, or their own experiences as good and brave shepherds,—these are the only topics of much interest to the shepherds of Palestine.

As a rule the shepherd is very hospitable. He makes many friends among the roving tribes and the travelling men. He sympathizes heartily with the latter because he himself is a traveller, and renders them every assistance in his power. His hospitality is most touchingly manifested when a thirsty wanderer on the waterless mountain cries out to him, "Water! water! water! Oh, save me from the hand of death!" The shepherd rushes to the rescue, and holds a refreshing cup of milk to his lips, which soon revives him.

In like manner when it is a hungry

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man that appeals to him, the shepherd is quick to respond. He opens wide his "jurab," or grip, and generously feeds him from its ample store of honey, figs, and cakes. Sometimes, too, when a poor stranger has fallen a victim to thieves and robbers, and is left stripped and fainting on the ground, his cries and groanings catch the ear of the shepherd, who hastens to his aid. Like the Good Samaritan, he binds up his wounds, covers his nakedness with the best that he has, and cares for him until he is able to go on his way, or accompanies him to his home.

II.

COVENANTS.

THE constant strife and fighting among various Arabs affect the shepherds to a great extent. The conflicting parties always direct their main power against the flocks. Therefore unions and covenants of the shepherds with each other are but the natural results of these conflicts. Such covenants are kept in the most sacred manner. It may be interesting to touch briefly upon some of them, and describe the manner in which they are made.

First : The covenant of drinking. When two parties formally drink to-

20 The Shepherd Song

gether of water, coffee, or wine, they enter by that act into a binding covenant of lasting friendship.

Second: The covenant of salt, or of eating. Because salt is a necessary element in man's food, and also because it is one of the best of preservatives, its symbolic use is well adapted to the making of covenants. It is a well-known fact that the Orientals eat a great deal more salt than any other people. Moses ordered the priests to use salt in all the sacrifices; and people held for a long time the belief that salt contained the elements of life; therefore mothers were more than anxious to wash their infants with salt when they were born; so also dead bodies were always buried in coffins that contained salt, in the belief that the life in the salt might finally be absorbed by the lifeless bodies. Even at the present time Mohammedan women,

The Twenty-third Psalm 21

as the surest means to protect their male infants from the evil eye, put salt in their sleeves whenever they carry them outdoors.

Two sheiks are often seen swearing to each other a covenant by partaking of salt offered at the point of their swords; showing thereby that they will never use these swords against each other. This covenant, of course, is not confined to the eating of salt, but is extended to the eating of everything salted. When two parties invite each other to dine in their tents, they pledge themselves to a covenant of friendship, which may be made still stronger by extending the entertainment to three days. It is often heard said: "I will refrain from laying hands on this man, or harming his wife, his children, or anything that belongs to him, because (*beinana mulhh wa khubz*) we have eaten bread and salt together.

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Sometimes a man wishes to ask a favor from his friend, perhaps to request the hand of his daughter. It is then customary for him, as soon as he enters his friend's house, to keep silent and to refrain from touching his host's bread and water. The master of the house understands from this refusal to make a covenant that his guest has an object in visiting him. He therefore says to him: "Friend, tell me, please, your desire, and I promise to grant it if it is within the reach of my power"; and not till his desire is granted does he make covenant by taking bread from his host's table. Such was the exact method used by Abraham's servant when he sought the hand of Rebecca for his master, Isaac.

Third: The covenant of blood. This is considered to be the most sacred and binding of all the covenants. It embraces the first and sec-

The Twenty-third Psalm 23

ond. In the Hebrew and Arabic languages the expression "to make a covenant" is alike. In Hebrew they say *barath berith* or in the Arabic *kataa aahden*, which means in both "to cut"; an expression which conveys the idea of cutting something in the act of making a covenant. Among the Oriental people such covenants are always made among sheiks, princes, and high dignitaries, and are accompanied with a great feast in which all participate. When Laban called upon Jacob to make a covenant with him, it is said, "And they took stones and made a heap; and they did eat there upon the heap." Gen. xxxi. 46. Guests of high rank, whose friendship is much desired, are given not only bread and salt by their host, but also lambs and goats are killed for them unsparingly. As soon as the guest steps over the

**Covenant
of
Blood**

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threshold of the host's tent, the sheik immediately takes a knife in his own hand and kills sheep after sheep ; and not until he is stopped by his guest does he cease to kill and shed blood. "He is cutting a covenant," as the Orientals express it. But in case his guest is his equal or superior in rank, instead of killing lambs and goats he kills heifers and young camels in order to entertain his guest in a princely manner.

It is very interesting to study how such covenants are made between the
Sheiks leaders of Bedouin tribes.
Making Two sheiks, representa-
Covenants tives of their tribes, ap-
pear before a great assemblage of men. They take a sheep and, with great solemnity, kill it and cut it into halves, setting the one opposite the other. Then the two sheiks step into the space between the two parts of the slaughtered sheep and,

The Twenty-third Psalm 25

while looking to heaven, dip their hands in the blood on each side and clasp each other's stained hand strongly, swearing to this most sacred covenant of blood by saying to each other, "I swear by the name of the Most High that your enemies shall always be my enemies, and your friends shall always be my friends." Men of both tribes confirm this covenant by saying, "God is witness between us." Sacrifices of lambs, sheep, and young camels are then offered, and a great feast is celebrated in which all participate.

When God wanted to assure Abraham of His willingness to enter with him into a binding covenant, He ordered him to do this same thing just as it is done among the shepherds of this present time. God's presence between the pieces of the sacrifices which Abraham killed, and set one against the other, assured Abraham

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that a lasting covenant with God had been ratified and sealed. "Behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." Gen. xv. 17.

Paul the Apostle alluded beautifully to this covenant of blood in Heb. xiii. 20, when he said, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," etc. Our great Shepherd hath made with us an everlasting covenant by shedding His blood for us on Calvary, and this loving feast of the Lord's Supper that we still keep is to remind us always of that covenant.

Blood is a symbol of union and life. It is natural, therefore, that the shepherds should use blood to cement their love to each other, and unite them into one body.

The Twenty-third Psalm 27

It is claimed by some shepherds that they have ways by which they are able to make covenants with their enemies the snakes. The natives frequently express it in this manner, “This shepherd has drunk the covenant of the serpent”; because they believe that the shepherd drinks actually the poison of the snake in making the covenant; consequently he obtains from such an act a power and a charm over all snakes, so that none of them dare hereafter to injure him or his flock. This may seem ridiculous, but I believe that the shepherd, by his kindness to and gentle treatment of these reptiles, often feeding them with milk and eggs, is able to gain their friendship; or, if you please, call it their covenant. “Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment,” says Eccles. x. 11. “Behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among

**Covenants
with
Serpents**

28 The Shepherd Song

you, which will not be charmed ; and they will bite you, saith the Lord." Jer. viii. 17. This custom must have been known in the old times as well as in the present.

When the shepherds are not busy with their flocks, they are weaving tents, coats, or slings. Even while feeding their sheep a spindle is constantly whirling in their hands turning the fleece into threads.

The exposed and open-air life of the shepherd builds him up physically, and makes him a **Called up** **Higher** strong, heroic man. His coolness and daring, in his constant struggles with his enemies and those of his flock, bring him to the front, and he becomes known to all as a hero. At the same time his faithfulness in the care of his sheep marks him as the right man to lead the people. All the men of his tribe unite to appoint him their emir, or sheik.

The Twenty-third Psalm 29

They call him up higher, to lead a more important flock than the one he has been leading.

Such was the case of Moses, who, after he had been leading sheep for almost forty years, was graduated successfully in that school of the shepherd, and was called to lead a better flock—God's people, the Israelites. So also was it with David, who, having proved himself a hero in his early youth by defending his sheep from lions and bears, was called out from among the flocks to be the King of Israel. "He chose David also, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance." Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71.

III.

NIGHT WATCHES.

As the shepherds of Palestine live in a country dangerous to their flocks **Sheepfolds** every one of them has to build a sheepfold, called by our people "marah," to protect the sheep from attack by night. It is a round enclosure, built within a wall about six feet high. On top of the wall are thorns and hedges to keep wolves and other enemies away.

Hear the complaint of Satan in reference to Job: "Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side?" Job i. 10. Yes, indeed, our Good Shepherd builds a

The Twenty-third Psalm 31

fold despite the complaints and protests of our enemies.

At night time the shepherd may be seen standing with his eyes straining in all directions. Thieves and robbers dare not enter into the sheepfold by the door, lest the shepherd discover them, "but will climb up some other way." John x. 1. As soon as the shepherd's ear catches the prowling of the beasts coming nearer and nearer to the sheepfold, he cries out "Hoo, Ha, Ha, Ha!" and continues, especially during the three hours of the early night. The shepherd's sling is always at work hurling stones to frighten the enemies away, and his voice is ever heard in the dark silent hours. This is the "night watch."

Just above the entrance of the sheepfold the shepherd erects a tent made of branches, which stands higher than the wall, and is called "irsaal."

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In ancient times it was called a "tower."

The shepherds of Judea to whom the glad tidings of our Saviour's birth were first told were keeping, in such a tower, such a night watch over their flocks. They saw the lights of the City of David put out one after another, except one that remained shining in the inn at the further end of the city. Outside of this there was no light to be seen anywhere, for all people were sound asleep. But still the shepherds kept their vigil. The sky was clear; the moon's light soon disappeared behind the western hills, and darkness spread its wings everywhere, save for the glitterings of the stars that shone in the blue sky above. The shepherds' cries were still ringing in the valleys as they kept their night watch, "Hoo, Ha, Ha, Ha!" But the strange appearance of a cloud toward the east

The Twenty-third Psalm 33

alarmed them and hushed their voices; and when it began to travel fast toward them, they detected in it something that their eyes had never seen before. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid." After the angels had quieted their fears, they announced to them the glad tidings, "For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This was followed by a most beautiful sight as that cloud unfolded to their eyes a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

As soon as the angels were gone, the shepherds made a hasty **Shepherds'** preparation to visit the **Gifts to the** blessed babe. There is no **Saviour** question whether or not they carried

34 The Shepherd Song

presents with them; for it never occurs to an Oriental to make a visit of this kind to a mother of a male babe without carrying presents. The Wise Men of the East followed the Oriental custom. "When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh." Likewise these Oriental shepherds must have picked one or two of their best lambs and presented them to Him, with a few garments and some butter and milk; for such things would have come handy to Mary and Joseph under such circumstances. It is indeed a goodly sight to see the Lamb of God associated with the lambs of Judea, and the Good Shepherd with the shepherds of Palestine in the first day of His life on earth.

The Wise Men of the East who kept awake all night to study the stars, and the good shepherds who sleep-

The Twenty-third Psalm 35

lessly kept an effective watch over their sheep, were both rewarded with the “glad tidings” while the City of David slept through the glorious hours of that sacred night.

IV.

THE NIGHT CALL.

DURING an early night watch I once visited a shepherd in his sheepfold; and hearing him occasionally call out "Hoo! Ha! Ha!" I asked, "Is it necessary to call out thus during the night?" He answered: "My dear boy, if I don't call to my sheep thus, they will hear the voices of their enemies, and be frightened. If they do not hear my voice, they will hear the prowling of the wolves as they come nearer and nearer to the fold. They need to hear my voice in order that they may enjoy a quiet and restful sleep."

The Twenty-third Psalm 37

These words touched my heart, and have been a treasure to me ever since I joined the flock of Christ our Good Shepherd. Yes, if we would know comfort and safety in this world, we must train our ears to hear the sweet accents of our Shepherd's voice ; for when we cease to hear His voice we shall surely hear the frightful voices of our enemies.

How precious, then, must be His voice to us ! It serves not only to drown other voices, but to give us the assurance that He is with us, caring for us. And it is the binding duty of all servants of God to continue calling, calling, calling the flock, that enemies may not enter the fold. The more we read the Bible, the more we invoke the voice of our Shepherd, the more we shall live in peace and comfort, and the less we shall hear or heed the voice of our enemies.

38 The Shepherd Song

A shepherd once said to me : " On a dark, foggy night, I was leading **Shepherd's** my flock in the company of **Wisdom** an old experienced shepherd on the plains of Anti-Lebanon. My flock entered a pasture and was spread out about me grazing. Suddenly the flock rushed in a frenzied fright toward me. Suspecting the attack of a wolf, I levelled my gun to shoot at a shadow I saw moving at a distance ; but the old shepherd snatched the gun from me and said appealingly, 'Please do not shoot, lest the flock be frightened again by the shot ; for our flock loses many pounds of flesh when frightened. I prefer to frighten away the wolves by my sling and my voice, to which my flock are strongly attached.' "

"For they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers." John x. 4, 5.

The Twenty-third Psalm 39

Yes, they know his voice well, and would not exchange the voice of their Shepherd for all the treasures of the world.

Once a shepherd came to Ainzehalta, and, after making his flock lie down in the shade of a tree, he, being tired, fell asleep. I was a boy then, full of fun. I came near him and put on the shepherd's coat, and asked my cousin to make one or two of the sheep rise. One jumped up, looked at the coat I was wearing, and started to follow me, then another and another, and so on until quite a number were following me; and I was very proud of succeeding in drawing away the sheep from their own shepherd. When, however, I began to call "Taa, Taa! Ho, Ho, Ho," they realized that I was a stranger and turned back. They knew his voice, but they knew not the voice of the stranger.

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Sometimes a shepherd who has united his flock of one hundred sheep with many thousand other sheep, wishing to depart earlier than the others, simply stands at the entrance of the sheepfold and calls, "Taa, Taa! Ho, Ho, Ho!" His flock then come out from among all the others, for they know his voice and obey him. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." John x. 4.

V.

THE SHEPHERD'S OUTFIT.

EVERY shepherd must have a coat to protect himself from the weather, especially from the frost of the morning. He sometimes lends one sleeve to his wife and he takes the other, and both walk under one coat. I do not remember that I have ever seen an American coat thus fitted to do double duty, but I have seen a bicycle built for two.

The shepherd uses his coat for his bed, just the same as was the custom in the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is mentioned in Exodus xxii. 26, 27: "If thou at all take thy neigh-

**Aba, or
Coat**

**Coat
Serves
for Bed**

42 The Shepherd Song

bor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down ; for that is his covering only, . . . wherein shall he sleep ? ”

How can an Occidental explain to his audience the words of Christ, “Take up thy bed and walk” ? To his imagination, perhaps, that bed was made up of a double blanket, a pair of sheets, a pair of pillows, and a mattress, and would be a heavy burden for a man to carry. He will have a different idea of the matter when he travels in Palestine, and especially among the Arabs ; for he will see here and there a man sleeping in the open field, having a stone for his pillow, and an “aba” for his covering,—the very same bed that Jacob was using when he saw the ladder connecting earth and heaven, and angels ascending and descending upon it.

Damascus has been noted of old

The Twenty-third Psalm 43

as the best bazaar for the purchase of of such "abas," where they are made on a large scale. Shepherds in buying these "abas" look always to the quality and not to the fit; for they are all made big enough to fit any size. Their quality is easily ascertained by pouring water into one side of the "aba," to see if it is waterproof. If the water has not diminished after holding it up about ten minutes, they pronounce the coat to be indeed of a good quality.

This coat is made either of camel's hair or of a kind of wool which is well adapted for summer use, called "aba"; or of felt which is very heavy and better suited to the winter season, called "keek." Near the shoulder of the coat are two little straps which make a place for the rod and staff of the shepherd when they are not in use. Under this coat the shepherd wears a jacket made of

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sheepskin. This jacket and the long skirt, or "ghinbaz," underneath are fastened to the body by means of a leather belt or a long rope made of goat's hair.

Shepherds are always provided with a leather bag, called "jurab," in "Jurab" which they store their lunch- or Grip eon, cups (tassies), and the horns which are filled either with olive oil, butter (shemen), or cedar tar. Knives, needles, and numbers of other necessities are carried in this bag. This "jurab" has become a proverb among Oriental people. They say, "This is like jurab el raai" (shepherd's grip), meaning that it contains everything you want. A Syrian newspaper man in Boston has chosen for the title of his paper *Jurab el Kurdi*, or the grip of the Kurdish shepherd, intending to show that his paper contains all the news.

Around the belt the shepherd hangs

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The Shepherd Song

Sheepskin. This jacket and the long kurt or "g'inbaz," underneath are fastened to the body by means of a leather belt or a strong rope made of goat's hair.

Shepherds are always provided with a leather bag, called "jurab," in which they store their lunch-cups (tassies), and the little cups are filled either with olive oil or butter (shemen), or cedar tree leaves, needles, and numbers of other necessities are carried in the bag. This "jurab" has become a proverb among Oriental people.

They say, "this is like jurab el shaykh" (shepherd's grip), meaning that it contains everything you want. A Syrian newspaper man in Boston has chosen for the title of his paper *Jarab el Kurd'i*, or the grip of the Kurdish shepherd, intending to show that his paper contains all the news.

Around the belt the shepherd hangs

THE SHEPHERD'S OUTFIT

"His rod is in his right hand; his staff is inserted into his felt coat at the left, he wears a sheepskin jacket; his jurab, sling and reed are attached to his belt."—Pages 44-48.



The Twenty-third Psalm 45

his dagger and the musical instrument upon which he plays to his sheep.

This is made of two pieces of reed joined together, each containing six holes. **Musical Instruments**

It is called the shepherd's "mijwiz."

Sometimes, however, two or three pieces are added to one side of the "mijwiz." Then it is called "orghol."

Of course, the music from such a crude instrument is not symphonic. Nevertheless the sheep enjoy the music exceedingly.

The head of the shepherd is usually protected from the burning rays of the sun by a silk or cotton **Shepherd's** covering called "kaffia," fast- **Head-dress** ened to the head by a heavy rope of camel's hair,—the "aakaal."

The shepherd's feet are covered with sandals and felt or leather leggings; and with long leather boots which have high and sharp **Boots** steel heels, well fitted to crush the

46 The Shepherd Song

head of a serpent or knock down a wolf, or on horseback to be used as spurs. Both leggings and boots are indispensable in a country so full of poisonous snakes. This entire outfit of the shepherd has other uses.

Shepherds always carry a sling with them, which they make from the wool of the sheep. They practise a great deal with these slings, so that after a few years they become experts in using them. David's sling was of more service to him than any other weapon. He certainly must have been an expert, for he killed Goliath, the Philistine, with the first stone. The tribesmen of Benjamin, most of whom were shepherds, were noted for their accurate use of the sling. "Every one could sling stones at an hair breadth and not miss." (Judges xx. 16.)

The shepherd also carries a rod for defence, a weapon very helpful to

The Twenty-third Psalm 47

him in times of danger. It is called "dabbous" or "dabassia." It is made from a stout stick of oak wood. At the end **Rod** is a large ball covered with nails and pieces of iron. It is, indeed, a terrible weapon in his hands. The Roman soldiers suffered greatly from the armies of Zenobia, which carried such "dabbous." When the common steel pins were first introduced into our country, they were named "dabbous," because they resemble it so much in shape. Sometimes this rod is called "nabbout," which differs from this "dabassia," in that its ball at the end is not a separate piece, but is as it has grown. A shepherd occasionally pulls out a small tree from the ground, and then cuts off all the roots that shoot out from the stem, leaving only a round ball. This he covers with nails in the same manner as with the "dabassia."

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I believe the Psalmist meant the “nabbout” when he said “rod,” etc., because the Hebrew word **Staff** used for rod is “shebet,” which expresses the idea of a rod growing out of a root as “nabbout” in Arabic gives the idea of a rod springing out of the ground. This “nabbout” or “dabassia” must not be confused with the staff (“ikkaaz”) which the shepherd also carries with him. The staff is a straight, long cane upon which he leans, and which also is useful in managing the sheep.

The shepherds are accompanied by one or two dogs, because the coun-
Shepherds' try is full of enemies to the
Dogs sheep. The dogs' ears and tails are clipped, and their necks are protected by heavy collars covered all over with sharp steel points ; leaving no part easily vulnerable to wild beasts ; in other words, these fighting dogs are fittingly stripped by their owners for

The Twenty-third Psalm 49

battle with their enemies at all times. They render valuable service to the shepherd by guarding the sides and back of the flock, and warning him of the approach of danger, while he guards the front.

VI.

THE SHEPHERD LEADS THE FLOCK.

WHEN the morning star, the goddess of beauty and the first messenger of the dawn, sallies forth from her hiding-place beyond the eastern mountains, the stillness of the night is broken by the stir and excitement of the people rising from their sleep ; and cries and shouts of many kinds are heard from all parts of the town. A stranger may think that a great army, like the army of Cyrus, is attacking the town ; but he will understand the matter when he hears the woodman shouting to his comrades, the muleteer howling as he loads his

The Twenty-third Psalm 51

mules and camels, the woman calling her neighbors to rise, or the watchman crying out to keep away the jackals from the vineyards.

And it is our shepherd on yonder hill who has seen the morning star first, and, sounding his horn **An Early trumpet for his sheep to fol- Start** low, has started this great stir and resurrection of the people from their slumber. For in that hot country the shepherd can feed his flock only in the early hours of the day or in the late hours of the afternoon. When the gentle breezes of the evening cool the air, "he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." Such is the statement of our Lord; and it is true to life, for the shepherd always goes ahead of the sheep.

Here is a beautiful picture for you, my dear brother: The first row of the flock, numbering five or six sheep, follow close in the shepherd's track,

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their heads pointed upward to their shepherd. The middle sheep of this **First Row** row is called "kirras" (leader **with Lifted** or preacher). He wears a bell **Heads** which rings as they travel on. These front sheep are the most obedient to the shepherd, and each receives a special name according to its color. "He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out," saying, "Taa, Taa! Ho, Ho, Ho!" and they follow him. This first row of the sheep may be said to correspond to the ministers and deacons of the church, who ring the gospel bells, that the people may follow closely the precepts of Christ.

The heads of the sheep in the second, third, and fourth rows are bowed **All Others** down and hidden, and like a **with Bowed** mass of headless bodies the **Heads** sheep move on as the surging waves of the ocean. Their union is wonderful, their love to each other

The Twenty-third Psalm 53

and to their shepherd has no equal. Cemented together in love and trust, they humble themselves and bow their heads toward the ground, the one close to the other, as if each one would say, "I trust fully my shepherd, and do not question which way he leads me. I know this, that he will lead me in right and safe ways; therefore, I blindly and confidently follow."

Let us look carefully at this picture of the shepherd and his sheep; let us copy this example of union and love, and of perfect confidence in the Great Shepherd. Like a flock thus united, may we travel this life of ours in this world, having our Shepherd as Leader. The only time that the heads of the sheep show is when danger appears; then they look toward their shepherd in appeal for help. May we, also, go unto our Shepherd in prayer when danger approaches us.

VII.

SHEEP AND SHEARING.

OUR Oriental sheep differ a great deal from the sheep found elsewhere.

**Oriental
Sheep** As a rule they are kinder and meeker, their attachment and love for their shepherd and also to each other having no parallel in any other kind of sheep. The common danger which threatens them all makes them more united, and forces them to depend upon their shepherds for guidance. It is far different with sheep found in places less dangerous; thus in the island of Cyprus you will find the sheep scattered all over the plain, because there are no wolves to threaten their lives;

The Twenty-third Psalm 55

and the shepherd, instead of leading them, drives them before him.

We have two prominent and distinct kinds of sheep—the “white sheep” and the “red sheep.”

The white sheep, so called on account of its long white wool, is much lighter in weight than the red sheep. The red sheep, well known as the “mour” sheep, is reared in abundance in Erzeroum, and the surrounding countries north of Arabia. The color of its wool varies; sometimes it is a rather dark brown, sometimes gray and black, but it is always thick and silky.

The tail of the Oriental sheep is divided into two parts, the one above the other (the upper part is horn-shaped, and is called “asause”; the lower part, larger and round in shape, is called “lyyia”), making altogether a very heavy tail, weighing from fifteen to forty pounds, and compelling

White
and Red
Sheep

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shepherd and sheep to travel slowly. Especially while crossing the streams the shepherd has to watch carefully lest the sheep should be carried away by the water, because their heavy tails sometimes entangle them in swimming.

The rams, of both kinds, are easily distinguished from the ewes by their long curved horns, and also by their much heavier tails. Rams may have two or four horns, but rarely six or eight; while the ewes have either none or only two short horns. The horns are used for trumpets, or as receptacles for oil and butter, and sometimes for gunpowder flasks.

Farmers generally buy the red sheep, and feed it on mulberry leaves and grass until about the 1st of July, when the women start in the "til-keem," which means the forcing of the leaves into the mouth of the sheep in order to fatten it; and they

The Twenty-third Psalm 57

are proud when the sheep becomes so heavy that it can scarcely move, especially when it weighs a "kintar," which is understood in the system of sheep-weighing to mean thirty Syrian "ruttle," or 170 pounds. During October they kill the fat sheep and invite their neighbors to help them prepare it for "kowrama"; which is the fat boiled well with small morsels of red meat, and preserved in air-tight jars, to be used in cooking during the winter and spring months.

The wool of the sheep is of great value to the shepherd. The best wool known in the Orient is that of the camel's hair; and the second in value is the wool of the "mour" sheep and the "miraaz," which are generally silky; many of the Oriental rugs are made of these three kinds. The climate affects the quality of the wool. Thus a moderate climate, like Kurdistan, usually

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produces a far better and more silky wool than a very cold climate like Russia, or a very hot climate like Africa. Sometimes the dampness or dryness of the air, as also the feeding of the sheep, affects to a certain degree the quality of the wool.

It is customary among Oriental shepherds to brand their sheep on their wool by a special mark of red dye, as a means to identify them when lost. We, too, are sprinkled by the blood of our Shepherd, so that the world may distinguish us as His own flock. Other shepherds adopt additional means to identify their sheep, either by cutting a special mark at the end of the sheep's ear, or by burning such a mark with a hot piece of iron on the body of the sheep.

The shearing of the sheep is a great occasion in the life of the shepherd.

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It is generally celebrated with many festivities. Some time between March and April the shepherd **Shearing** calls his friends to help **of Sheep** him in shearing his flock. The cold weather having passed, the long coat of wool that the sheep had during the cold winter months is no longer needed. One by one they are brought up to the fold by the shepherd, and each is laid gently on the ground, the shepherd's knee being upon it. He then clips its long wool on all sides until it is stripped of its winter coat. While this is done the sheep keeps perfectly silent and quiet. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth." (Isaiah liii. 7.)

Generally after the sheep are shorn, the shepherd takes them into **Washing** the water to give them a **the Sheep** good washing. Solomon said, "Thy

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teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing." (Song iv. 2.)

As the shepherd realizes a big profit from the sale of wool, and as the shearing means to him the deliverance of his flock from the hard and severe winter just passed, he celebrates it with a great supper, to which many of his friends are invited. It is really a thanksgiving feast in which all friends participate. David struck a good time to send his young men for gifts when Nabal was shearing his sheep in Carmel, telling them to say to Nabal: "Wherefore, let the young men find favor in thine eyes; for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy son David." (1 Sam. xxv. 8.)

It was certainly a good day to Nabal and his house, for they were saved to him, because David and his men "were a wall unto them both by

The Twenty-third Psalm 61

night and day." (1 Sam. xxv. 16); and it was celebrated by Nabal with a great feast, though at last he became intoxicated and lost his life.

Shepherds are very superstitious as to the time they should shear their sheep. The favorite **Shepherds'** time is at the first appear- **Supersti-**ance of the crescent moon, **tion** when they begin sheep-shearing and keep on until the moon is full. When she starts to wane, they soon give up their work, believing that it brings bad luck to shear the sheep then. Another superstition, not less important, relates to the protection of their flocks. Whenever a shepherd succeeds in killing a wolf he immediately strips its bones of flesh and uses them, especially the jaw bones, as charms, fasten- **Bone**ing them about the neck of **Charms** the sheep for protection from wolves and other enemies. Farmers also beseech the shepherds to give them

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these charms, that they may fasten them around the necks of their camels, horses, and cows. These bone charms can be seen to-day in Palestine dangling from the neck of many a sheep, or camel, or horse.

Farmers who are on good terms with the shepherds, and who receive **Shepherd's** from them such generous **Beard** gifts, occasionally remember them at seedtime. When the day's work is over the farmer throws a handful of seed toward the corner of his field for good luck to his friends among the shepherds. Whenever these seeds grow up into large plants, the shepherd feeds his flock on them without any objection from the farmer; such growth is well known by the appellation "the shepherd's beard."

The shepherd's flock numbers usually about a hundred sheep, but

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sometimes it is augmented by the purchase of another man's flock. The old pets of the shepherd are then mixed with the newcomers. This intrusion naturally creates jealousy which leads to bitter fights between the rams ; which fight resembles much the fight between roosters. But the shepherd comes always to the rescue ; he stands as a peacemaker between the fighters and offers each one grass ; sometimes he separates them with his staff ; and gradually they learn to love each other.

Shepherd
a Peace-
maker

Yes, indeed, the shepherd is the unity of his flock ; he is the fountain of all their supplies, the source of their safety and comfort, their very life and existence.

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD ; I SHALL NOT WANT.”

VIII.

*"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside the still waters."*

WHEN the sun is high in the sky, shedding its hot rays over the land, the shepherd, feeling the sultry heat, starts with his far-spent flock in search of the cooling, refreshing streams. If he tarries it means death to himself and his sheep, for the sun is intensely hot; in some places it would take but a few minutes to cook an egg in the sand.

When the shepherd is in a strange locality, he anxiously inquires of this **Rest before** farmer or that wood-cutter **Drinking** where he can find water, appealing to them to direct him to

The Twenty-third Psalm 65

the nearest streams. As soon as he learns where they are he hurries towards them, for both he and his flock are thirsty and exhausted. When he reaches the green pastures which indicate the existence of water, he takes his staff and, lightly beating the first row of his flock, makes them understand that they are to lie down. They obey him and their example is followed by the others until the whole flock is lying on the grass. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." The shepherd knows the sheep ought to have a little rest before they are brought to the water. So they lie down in those green pastures for rest, and not for nourishment, because those pastures are much trodden and not fit to eat.

The words "He leadeth me" are translated from the Hebrew verb "yneheleni," which means, in both Hebrew and Arabic, "He taketh me

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to the waters to give me the first draught," instead of from the word "aalel," which means to drink again and again. The verse reads thus in the Hebrew: "To the waters of rest he taketh me, to give me the first draught."

And the word "still" is taken from the Hebrew word "mnohhoth," which means rest; so also the **Still Waters** Arabic verb "nahka" or "anahka," from the same root, means to make the camel kneel down for rest; therefore the words "still waters" may be read "waters of rest," which means motionless waters, contrary to the rushing or flowing waters.

The shepherd's first step is to study the streams, some of which are very small, and the water is found in separated pools almost covered with moss and water plants. The shepherd brushes aside these plants, and if

66 The Shepherd Song

to the waters to give me the first draught," instead of from the word "sake!" which means to drink again and again. The verse reads thus in the Hebrew: "The waters of rest he taketh me, to give me the first draught."

And the word "still" is taken from the Hebrew word "mancoth," which means rest, so also the Sanskrit word "nauka" or "nauka" from the same root, means to kneel down for rest, therefore the words "still waters" may be read "waters of rest," which means motionless waters. Contrary to the rushing or flowing waters.

The shepherd's first step is to study the streams some of which are very small and the water is found in separate pools almost covered with moss and water plants. The shepherd fishes with these plants, and if

The shepherd is studying the river Jordan to select a still and shallow spot to which he may
safely lead his sheep — Page 66

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necessary draws the water into a pool that he himself has made. He never leads his flocks to drink water that he has not carefully and thoroughly examined.

The water is sometimes brackish, and contains various kinds of worms, such as leeches, which, when **Preparing** swallowed by the sheep, will **the Water** stick to their throats, suck their blood and hinder them from eating for many days, often causing their death. The shepherd remedies this condition by sprinkling cedar tar on the surface of the brackish water, thus purifying it and freeing it from worms or snakes.

Then the shepherd goes back to his flock and leads ten or fifteen sheep to the pool which he has pre- **Watering** pared, and stands near by **the Flock** whistling and saying "Tirrrr, Tirrrr." When they hear this peculiar call they understand that it is a water call, and rush impetuously to quench their

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thirst. Then he takes them back and brings another squad to be watered.

But when the turn of the helpless and innocent lambs comes, he tenderly lifts them in his arms and carries them to the streams; and from his own cup he cools their little parched throats until each and every lamb is entirely refreshed. The shepherd repeats this act of mercy before departing for the mountain pastures.

Sometimes, coming to great rivers, the shepherd is obliged to study the river and select a spot where the waters are stretched out in a shallow, when he goes into it, using his staff to fathom its depth at all points. When he is satisfied that there is no danger for his sheep in the still water, he calls his flock; and, carrying in one hand a handful of grass and in the other his staff, he descends to the waters

The Twenty-third Psalm 69

calling, "Taa, Taa! Ho, Ho, Ho!" Usually the sheep are timid, but after much coaxing they descend into the water, following close in the steps of their shepherd. When he sees them all entering the waters, he whistles to them, and the sheep hearing his familiar "Tirrrr" straightway begin to drink of the water.

Sometimes a sheep turns his head in another direction, when he is caught by the current and threatened with drowning on account of his heavy tail. But the shepherd, hearing his distressed bleating, hurries to his assistance, stretches forth his hands and pulls him out before he sinks. Sometimes the sheep is carried by the stream beyond reach; then the shepherd sends his dog to help him back.

How beautiful, dear brethren, to see a shepherd crossing to the other side of the river with his flock! O that we may see by the eye of faith

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our Great Shepherd leading us step by step as we cross the river of death to our heavenly abode !

But the shepherd may not always have the luxuries of streams and rivers **Wells and Fountains** for his flock. He has then to be satisfied with wells of water. In some parts of the Holy Land water is very scarce, especially during the summer, when all the springs and streams are dried. Such places are supplied with wells, some of which are filled by springs, while others are filled by rain-water. These wells are the common property of the inhabitants. Every now and then an announcement will be made from the top of the houses, saying, "The fountain will be opened to-day, let all come to seek water there." It is so interesting then to see a great crowd coming out from the village, some to replenish their pitchers and jars, others to wash their sheep and lambs.

These will not measure growth
get production and the
is also the fact that

The Shepherd Song

Our Great Shepherd, leading us step by step as we cross the river of death to our heavenly abode!

But the shepherd may not always have the luxuries of streams and rivers to drink and for his flock. He has then to content us to be satisfied with wells of water. In some parts of the Holy Land water is very scarce, especially during the summer, when all the springs and streams are dried. Such places are supplied with wells, some of which are filled by springs, while others are filled by rain-water. These wells are the common property of the inhabitants. Every now and then an announcement will be made from the top of the houses, saying, "The fountain shall be opened to-day, let all come to drink water there." It is so interesting then to see a great crowd coming out from the village, some to replenish their pitchers and jars, others to wash their sheep and lambs.

"These wells and fountains are a great resort of lovers; the town
gossip is discussed and the daily news bulletin
is scheduled there."—Page 71.

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“There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zechariah xii. 11.)

The shepherds, on account of the scarcity of water, are obliged to secure wells for their own sheep. About noontime one flock after another comes down from the mountains to these wells. When they have all gathered, the shepherds unite to lift up the stone lid that covers the mouth of the well, descend ten or twenty steps to the very bottom, fill their buckets with water, and empty them into the stone troughs at the surface until they are full. Then the shepherd brings a few sheep at a time to the still water, or “water of rest” in the trough, repeating this performance until all have drunk.

These wells and fountains are also a great resort of lovers; the town

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gossip is discussed, and the daily news bulletin is scheduled at the fountain.

Resorted to It was at a well of water
for Love that the servant of Abraham
and Gossip found Rebecca for his master Isaac. Jacob likewise made love to Rachael and Moses met Zipporah at the wells of water; and both were married to them afterwards. These wells are the Oriental "lovers' lane" even to this day.

The shepherd gives rest, shade, and water to his flock between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. When he feels the evening breeze coming up, he resumes his march toward the best pastures, commencing with the banks of streams, which are generally covered with green grass. Then he follows up the stream, providing his flock with water on one side and grass on the other.

" HE LEADETH ME BESIDE STILL WATERS."

IX.

"He restoreth my soul."

WHEN the southern breeze tempers the scorching rays of the sun, the shepherd leaves these **Sheep's** streams and takes to the **Temptation** roads, his flock following. As these roads are always narrow, the sheep have to follow in a long line; and the golden corn waving on this side and the wheat and barley swaying on the other side are often too strong a temptation to some of the hungry sheep, especially to the few who are lagging behind. The watchman who is appointed by the villagers to protect their property drives these straying sheep home with him, advertises

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them from the top of the houses, and compels the shepherd to pay a fine for each of his sheep which went astray. The watchman's word is law. The shepherd pays the fine immediately, and the sheep are returned to him. For this reason the shepherd becomes very careful to "restore," or bring back, the sheep when they go astray. "He restoreth my soul," as the Psalmist said. It is a true Oriental expression, this "He restoreth me." Poor sheep! when they go astray they can never find their own way back to their shepherd. Nor can they be left to wander; for their enemies, especially the wolves, will kill them. As soon as they feel themselves alone, they begin to bleat, and they bleat again and again until their shepherd hears them.

He is kept busy much of the day bringing back his sheep and restoring them to the flock. It is

The Twenty-third Psalm 75

hard work, but he keeps at it continually and faithfully. He **Shepherd's** often uses his sling on the **Patience** straying sheep to frighten them back to the flock.

The Hebrew word for "restoreth" is "yshobeb," meaning, "He directs my face to the right paths."

The shepherd has to do the **Restoreth** same when straying sheep do not listen to his voice. Occasionally he lifts the sheep's hind legs up to his own breast, and pushes them forward, directing their faces toward the right paths.

A lost sheep, lost in the darkness ! The news is enough to awaken in a shepherd's heart all the feelings of affection, all the **Lost Sheep** powers of action. He can never sleep nor be comforted except his lost sheep is brought back safely to the flock. Unless one has experienced the same loss, he cannot

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fathom the depths of the shepherd's anxiety.

Once my father sounded such an alarm because of the loss of two sheep from our home. It struck us at once that the older of the two sheep, having lately suffered severe pain from an inflamed wound that had made him restless and irritable, must have led the younger sheep to stray off with him into the darkness.

A searching party was soon made up and, each carrying a "fanous," or lantern, we set out to seek the lost sheep. The sound of our voices was soon heard ringing among the hills, calling "Hoo, Hoo! Ta, Ta, Ta!" But there was no trace of the wanderers, no voice to be heard save the prowling of the wolves and jackals that fled in great fright before us as they saw our strange lights. We searched the valleys, the forests, and the hills, feeling our way through the

The Twenty-third Psalm 77

darkness with our staves and partially guided by the dim lights ; sometimes falling, sometimes straying, sometimes caught in the bushes and tearing our clothes.

When our anxious father saw our lights on the opposite hills he called to us, and not till he heard us answer and knew that we were safe did he ask, "Have you found the sheep?"

The rumor of our loss had already been spread through the village, for the inhabitants had seen our lights wandering on the hills and knew what it meant, such sights being familiar to them. The long suspense of our fruitless search caused us many fears for the safety of the sheep. They might have fallen into the clutches of the merciless wolves ; they might have been thrown from a precipice ; they might have been drowned in the marshes or rivers ; or they might have

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been caught in the bushes like Isaac's ram.

At last, after a long and careful search, we discovered a trail of the sheep on the soft sand; at once we ascended the hill and cried out, "Ha, Hoo! Ta, Ta, Ta!" and after we had listened a while, the faint voices of our sheep were heard on the distant hill, "Maaaa!" Poor creatures, they had been wandering blindly on the hills, and had waited long for help to come.

"I lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." (Ps. 121.) At once we rushed to their side; thank God, both were safe. We led them home with great joy; and as we neared the town, our father, who was anxiously waiting for our safe return, saw the lights descending the hill, and immediately called to us again, "Have you found them?" The answer we sent back to him, "Saved,

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been caught in the bushes like Isaac's ram.

At last, after a long and careful search, we discovered a trail of the sheep on the soft snow. At once we ascended the hill and cried out, "Hia, Hio! Ta, Ta, Ta!" and after we had listened a while the faint voices of our sheep were heard on the distant hill. "Haa!" Poor creatures, they were wandering blindly on the hill, and waited long for help to come.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." (Ps. 121) At once we rushed to their side, thank God, both were safe. We brought them home with great joy; and as we neared the town, our father, who was anxiously waiting for our safe return, saw the lights descending the hill. He immediately called to us again: "Have you found them?" The answer we sent back to him, "Saved,

AT HOME WITH HIS PET.

"The answer we sent back to him, 'Saved, both saved!' was enough to fill that little home with rejoicing."--Page 78

The Twenty-third Psalm 79

both saved," was enough to fill that little house of ours with great rejoicing. Rejoicing, did I say? Why, every member of our family asked us to tell again and again the story of how our sheep were sought for, found, and saved. "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

X.

*"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake."*

THE shepherd walks always ahead of his sheep ; he leads, he does not drive. He is the first to face the dangers, he is the first to fight the enemies, of the flock. With the steel spike in the heels of his boots he crushes the head of the snake which coils itself on the road, and with his sling he frightens away the wolves that lurk behind the rocks. Sometimes he comes to what seems a pleasant plain covered with flowers and grass ; but when he steps upon this treacherous spot, he sinks deep into

The Twenty-third Psalm 81

a swamp. He quickly extricates himself and calls warningly to his flock lest they perish there. Thus he makes of the dangerous paths paths of righteousness, and of the difficult roads roads of safety.

Our Good Shepherd saith, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Be courageous, dear friends, and fear not, for He is our faithful Leader. His rod shall crush the head of the serpent, and His feet shall divide the swelling waters of the river of death, so that we may after Him pass in safety to heaven.

XI.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

It may seem surprising that, after the Psalmist has said “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,” the leading into the valley of the shadow of death should follow; but the Syrian shepherd had to lead his flock through such dangerous valleys because they brought him to the best pastures.

The Hebrew word used here for valley is “gei.” This word was used
Gei, or in the Bible only for par-
Valley ticular valleys. The three following examples may help to con-

The Twenty-third Psalm 83

vey the primitive idea of the use of this word.

(1) "Gei" was applied to the valley of Hinnom, which was noted for human sacrifices offered to Moloch, the god of the Ammonites. Such a valley, full of bones, naturally attracts the wolves and hyenas, which terrify the people passing at night.

(2) "Gei" was also used for the "Valley of Salt," near the Dead Sea. This valley was void of life. No trees or plants grew there; neither did birds or animals dwell there.

(3) The valley of Zeboim, or Hyenas, is referred to by this particular word "gei." The presence of these filthy and obnoxious beasts tells us of its true character. (1 Sam. xiii. 18.)

In Arabic the word "gei" means a depressed, barren tract in the mountain, or a deserted valley or well where brackish rain-water settles. It is the

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name given by the Arabs to a well-known valley between the Haramine (two Mohammedan shrines) in the city of Mecca, because once a flood of rain swept that valley at night and destroyed all its inhabitants while they slept. The people saw the corpses strewn about and said, "It is indeed a *wady-el-gei*," a valley of death.

Therefore this word "gei," in both Arabic and Hebrew, pictures a dreadful valley, a habitation for vultures and eagles by day and a resort for wolves and hyenas by night. The scattered bones, the fiery eyes of the ferocious beasts, the filthy lake below, the gloomy, rugged road in front,—these daunt the traveller passing through. Shadows, shadows, shadows, some imaginary, some real, spring forth from many sources in that dark valley.

The shepherd is always cautious

The Twenty-third Psalm 85

when he enters such a valley with his flock. High mountains on each side cut him off from all communication. “Watch!” he first whistles to his flock, and every head that was formerly hidden is now lifted; every sheep strives eagerly to see his shepherd in that dark valley. “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.” (Psalm xxv. 15.)

**Heads
now
Lifted**

Sometimes a heavy fog settles in the valley like a veil, hiding the shepherd from his sheep. Poor sheep! they have lost sight of their shepherd, but he makes his presence known to every one. He calls, “Taa, taa, Taa! Ho, Ho, Ho!” and at once they realize that he is there.

My Shepherd’s voice is also calling to me; and “I fear no evil, for thou art with me”; or, as the Hebrew emphasizes it, “for Thou art Aaimmadi, Thou

**Aaimmadi :
Thou art
with me**

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art my standing pillar of trust, upon which I lean for rest and protection; Thou art mine all and in all." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are opened unto their cry." (Ps. xxxiv. 15.) Oh, how precious are the accents of His welcome voice in that dark valley!

By and by, as the fog begins to disappear, the moon sends her light down through the hills.

Shadows

Then, if the shadows of the rocks and trees frighten the sheep, the voice of their shepherd, acting like magic, quiets them. They need not fear these shadows even though there exist back of them reality. The sight of the shadow of their shepherd, in that dark valley, is their greatest comfort. His shadow is a shadow of life to them!

Soon the valley will witness a great battle between the shadow of life—that is, the shepherd—on one side,

The Twenty-third Psalm 87

and the shadow of death—that is, the wolves and hyenas— **Fight with** on the other side; and the **Wolves** flock will wait patiently for the victory of their shepherd.

Watch! a shadow moves. The shepherd watches its movements too, and taking his sling in his right hand hurls a stone at the enemy, the wolf. But while the shepherd is engaged in warding off a wolf from the front, another, which has been lurking behind the rock, suddenly springs forth and bounds into the very midst of the flock. The sheep become frightened and scatter in all directions. The shepherd's first thought is to gather his flock. He quickly climbs up on to a rock where the sheep can see him, and calls, "Taa, Taa! Ho, Ho!" Though the wolf is in their midst and has sunk his teeth in the side of some poor lamb, the sheep are not afraid; they seem oblivious to the fact that

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death is in their midst, because the familiar voice of their shepherd, carried on the wings of the gentle breeze, brings with it courage and assurance. Having successfully gathered his sheep, the shepherd immediately crushes the head of the wolf with his rod and delivers the lamb out of his clutches.

“As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out.” (Amos iii. 12.)
“And David said to Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep; and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him.” (1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35.)

Experienced shepherds can easily ascertain, by examining the wounds

The Twenty-third Psalm 89

inflicted, what kind of beast killed their sheep. They know well that lions, tigers, and panthers always kill their prey by first cutting the throat with their teeth, to suck the blood. But wolves as a rule first strike their prey with their paws in the weak side of the stomach next to the thighs, and then plunge in their heads to pull out the heart.

**Various
Ways
by which
Beasts
Attack**

Horses and donkeys are safe from the wolves as long as they are fastened tight to their chains; but when they get loose and fly before the wolf, exposing their sides, they fall an easy prey. The high-bred horse, the "caheel," which runs a great deal faster than the wolf can get the better of it, except when pursued by a pack of wolves,—then the chances are against him.

Once a prominent man of Kabbilias carelessly left his horse, "caheel," in

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the wilderness during the night, because he thought the horse was able **Wolves** to defend himself against **Fight Horses** the attack of any wolf. With the long hair of his tail used as a whip-lash, the horse did for several nights blind the wolves and baffle all their attacks. But at last the wolves trapped him with a clever trick. They dug ditches in the ground and secreted themselves therein; and when the poor horse was frightened by the approach of one wolf he dashed un-awares into the ditch of another; and the hidden wolf immediately struck the horse in the stomach and killed him.

Oxen, on the other hand, always fight with their heads and horns, **Oxen Win** never exposing their sides **in Fight** to the attack of enemies; therefore the wolves usually get the worst of a fight with them.

But the poor sheep, being much

The Twenty-third Psalm 91

the weaker, have no chance at all against their enemies; their whole safety lies in the hands of the shepherd.

There are many ways by which the shepherd protects himself and his sheep from the wolves, and his dogs help him; but they are timid when tigers and lions approach him.

A sheik once said: "It requires much caution and wisdom to fight these ferocious beasts. One should have a perfect control over his nerves, and should cover his body with thick felt, particularly winding his left hand with three folds of it; and in the right hand he should carry a sharp dagger." Then, as the tiger attacks him, he forces his left hand into the beast's mouth. The tiger's teeth sink harmlessly into the felt, and before he is able to withdraw his teeth, the shepherd, quick as lightning, stabs him in the stomach until he drops dead.

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Ask a shepherd of Palestine to show you his arms and his feet, or examine his whole body, and you will see that he is scarred with many wounds, some of which must have been very serious. He received these wounds in battling with the enemies of his flock. Shepherds are always proud of such wounds, because they are signs of their heroism. "But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." (Isa. liii. 5.)

After the resurrection of Christ, the Good Shepherd said: "Behold my hands and my feet, handle me and see"; showing His disciples the wounds that He had received while passing through the valley of the shadow of death on Calvary.

XII.

“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

THE shepherd always carries both a rod and a staff. As previously stated there is a distinction between them.

The rod, called “nabbout” or “dabassia” in Arabic, is a club used for defence against the enemies of the sheep. He never strikes the sheep with this terrible rod. It was this rod which God used to punish the Egyptians; with the rod Moses smote the rock in the wilderness, and water gushed forth. David, referring to his enemies, says, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.”

The staff, called “irkaaz,” is that on which the shepherd leans while

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walking. He also uses this long staff to punish the sheep when they go astray, and to extricate them when they are caught in the bushes. With this staff he makes the sheep to lie down, and to rise up. He sticks it into the ground, and over it places his coat to get a little shade from the sultry heat of the sun. Therefore this staff is a necessity both for himself and his flock.

Let us be comforted when we go through that dark valley. Our Shepherd is indeed present; we hear His voice; both His rod and His staff are in His hands; let not any passing shadows frighten us. We can see His shadow, the shadow of life, as the apostles saw His shadow walking on the waters, and afterwards realized that it was Christ himself. The valley may be gloomy, it may be dreadful, but the light of His face shall turn the darkness into day.

The Twenty-third Psalm 95

"They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa. ix. 2.)

The shepherd himself never intended to make this valley his permanent abode. As that dreadful valley of Hinnom was a necessary passage to reach the beautiful city of Jerusalem, so this valley to the shepherd is but a short road that he must pass in order to reach the green pastures. As he leaves it and reaches the summit of the mountain he sits down on the rock, with his coat well wrapped around him, to watch for the dawn of day. He sees first the morning star shining brilliantly above the eastern chain of Mt. Lebanon just opposite him. Then he feels the blowing of a strong chilly eastern wind. It is followed by a wonderful hush and calm in nature. The shepherd recognizes these as the forward messen-

**Watching
for the
Dawn**

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gers of the sunrise. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning." (Ps. cxxx. 6.) This is the voice of David the shepherd.

A few streaks of light begin to show in the east; gradually these streaks grow brighter and brighter, until the glorious sun rises from behind the screen of the eastern mountain. A beautiful and most charming panorama of nature greets his eyes as far as the shepherd can see. Winding chains of mountains, with the long valleys of Mount Lebanon between, are all around. It is indeed a paradise of beauty.

When the rays of the sun begin to lift up the white veil gradually from the face of the bashful valleys below, as from the faces of veiled women, he is charmed with the display of beautiful

**Charming
Scenery
of Lebanon**

The Twenty-third Psalm 97

and gorgeous verdure jewelled here and there with diamond drops of dew, while the cedar trees and flowers around him diffuse a fragrance not less delicious than the sweet music of the birds and the charming outlines of the varied peaks.

Dear old Lebanon! the memories of thy beautiful hills and charming valleys are brought back as vividly as if I saw them yesterday. No wonder that Solomon in his glory was fascinated with thy beauty when he said, "His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." (Song v. 15.) "The smell of thy garment is like the smell of Lebanon." (Song iv. 11.) No wonder that prophets spake and poets sang of the glory of Mount Lebanon. The grandeur of its scenery, the richness of its products, and the beauty of its climate are not surpassed in the world. But a more beautiful and

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grander scenery than all the glory of Lebanon shall meet the eyes of them that pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death in company with the Good Shepherd. Heaven with its glory and the sun of righteousness with all its blessedness shall be their reward.

XIII.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

WE must not rob these words of the Psalmist of their truth and beauty by assuming that David's imagery symbolizes a banquet and a host, or a table laid with dishes and napery, for we should miss one of the shepherd's best acts in caring for his sheep.

In order that our spirits may be truly as well as tenderly touched by the sweet music of David's harp, we should study the languages and customs of the primitive people of the Bible, or of those who have faithfully preserved them to this day.

First: The Hebrew verb "taa-

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rock" (thou preparest) means originally, both in Hebrew and Arabic, "to struggle" or "to fight." Later on "taarock" was used in the sense of "to prepare," also to describe the act of a woman kneading bread. If one were to see an Oriental woman struggling hard with her two hands to mix the flour with the water in the making of bread, he would undoubtedly realize that the use of the word, even then, does not differ from the original meaning, "to struggle." Therefore it was quite permissible for the sacred writers to use this word, "taarock," whenever they referred to bread or to shew-bread in the temple. But in this verse the Psalmist mentions enemies; we conclude, therefore, that by this verb is expressed the idea of struggling with, or fighting, all the enemies round about, in order to prepare the table for the shepherd's flock.

The Twenty-third Psalm 101

Second: The Psalmist uses the Hebrew word "shulhhan" for table. This word is derived from the original verb "shalehh," which means in both Hebrew and Arabic "to cast off" or throw down one's garment; and this is just what all Arabs do when they sit down to eat; they cast off their "abas" on the grass and on them spread their meals. It is perhaps the very act that led the primitive people to take the word "shulhhan" to express the idea of a table on the ground, such as was used by both shepherd and sheep.

If we come down from the lofty hills of Lebanon to the lowlands and valleys between, where the good pastures are generally found, we shall have a clear idea of the table and the way it is prepared. There you may see a number of shepherds casting down their coats, and spreading their food on them, while they sit cross-

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legged to eat. Christ himself commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and gave them bread and fish to eat. This great multitude of five thousand must have cast their coats on the grass, to serve them as tables, in the same manner that all Arabs now do. This was the sort of table the old patriarchs used while living a nomadic life. It was what David used as a shepherd, that is, a table of earth. The table, therefore, was the pasture itself.*

As a rule every shepherd will carefully examine every pasture before he leads his flock into it. Once a shepherd suffered severely from leading his sheep into a pasture without having prepared it. His neglect cost him

* A somewhat different use of the cast-off garments appears in the account of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem: "And [they] brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way." (Matt. xxi. 7, 8.)

The Twenty-third Psalm 103

the loss of three hundred sheep, because they ate some poisonous plants.

The shepherd is necessarily a botanist; he knows thoroughly the names and nature of all the plants in the vicinity. He knows that some of them are always poisonous, while others are so only when they first spring up, but are harmless when they are flowering. I had great difficulty when I was a boy to distinguish between the "bakli," the most poisonous plant, and the "ghar," the leaves of which natives usually boil with figs to give them a spicy flavor. The leaves of these two shrubs are almost alike, different as are their qualities.

The shepherd, then, thoroughly examines the pasture. He may discover poisonous growths like the "bakli" previously mentioned, which, although it bears flowers beautiful and fragrant as roses, the shepherd

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knows is fatal to the lives of the sheep. Other poisonous plants may not be as conspicuous as these, but the shepherd will be sure to find them out and burn them.

Again, he may discover caves and pits at the side of the pasture, which
Beasts are frequented by wolves, hyenas, bears, and lions. He will immediately close up these caves so that these enemies cannot escape. If he discovers an eagle's nest in the neighborhood, he will destroy it and frighten the eagles away. He also examines the holes under the grass, where snakes are often found, and
Eagles and Snakes by burning the fat of hogs will get rid of these deadly enemies. When his task is complete, he calls his flock to the pastures ; and each sheep, if it could speak, might say the words of David, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

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"The picture shows his rod in his hand, also the 'aud' or lute, on which David played; also a lamp, sling, cup and reed."—Page 105.

The Twenty-third Psalm 105

It gladdens the heart of the shepherd to see his sheep nibbling so contentedly from the pasture-table that he has so carefully and so patiently made ready for them. With a heart overflowing with joy and satisfaction, he fills the valleys with chanting and with the soft and smooth music of his reed. So, though God hath chosen to give us a table in the presence of our enemies, He hath also sent us forth with His mighty power to prepare it.

Our table, in this land, is one of the best the world ever had. We have not many wolves nor **Our Worst** many lions to fear, as in **Enemies** other countries; yet there are many flourishing plants which are poisonous to the life of the Church. The flowers that these plants bear have tempted many sheep and lambs. It is very hard for the Church to uproot them entirely. Especially I refer to that

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most poisonous plant which flourishes in the midst of our public streets and grows very close to the doors of our churches, which harbors serpents under its leaves and shelters scorpions with its flowers. But God hath also armed us with the mighty sword of faith to destroy them. They may spring up again and again with a mightier growth than ever; but, holding fast to our swords of faith, let us keep on cutting them down without relaxation day after day.

The good shepherd will never forget the sick sheep he left behind.

**Shepherd's
Care of the
Sick and
the Lambs** Before leaving the pasture you will see him tying his sling around his waist as a belt, and storing bundles of good fresh grass in his coat for the sick ones. Sometimes his ewes will give birth to lambs while he is on the mountains. He places these young lambs, or those of them that have

The Twenty-third Psalm 107

broken legs, right inside his coat; and every now and then will be seen gathering the tenderest grass to feed them. It is both amusing and pathetic to see these lambs raising their heads and bleating, while the mothers are following his track. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah xl. 11.)

Mothers—it should be a great comfort to you to follow the track of the Good Shepherd as he travels homeward with your young lambs; they are perfectly safe with Him, "neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand"; and while they are close to His breast and near to His heart, they will feel the throbbing of His rich love, that soon leads them to love Him supremely as their dearest Shepherd.

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In case the pastures are far away from the home, the shepherd has to **Caves as** prepare a temporary sheep-**Sheepfolds** fold for his flock in the caves near by. He begins by driving out the wolves from the caves. When he is certain that there are no enemies left inside, he brings his flock safely into the cave, and, after blocking all exits except the main entrance, he and his dog lie down there to watch through the hours of the night. "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Ps. lxi. 2.)

These caves are sometimes large enough to accommodate a shepherd and his flock of one or two **Caves as** hundred sheep. They are **Shelters** found in all parts of Syria. **and** They are the resorts of **Dwellings** thieves and robbers, and are also a shelter to homeless and fleeing men. David in his flight from Saul's face lived in a cave for many days. Jeph-

The Twenty-third Psalm 109

thah and his band of idle men made their headquarters in these caves. Even to this present time, it is not at all uncommon to find bands of robbers, magicians, dervishes, homeless people, and even shepherds with their flocks, making these caves their dwelling-places. In the district of Houran there is a tribe of Druses, numbering not less than ten thousand men, who for many years have been and still are fortifying themselves in such caves.

The shepherd finds these caves very convenient while he is near the mountain pastures ; but when he fails to secure such a safe shelter for his sheep, instead of leaving his flock on the mountains exposed to all dangers, the shepherd leads them back to the sheepfold as soon as darkness falls on the earth.

The lambs that have been sepa-

**Leading
Home the
Flock**

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rated from the ewes during the day, hearing their mothers' steps approaching, immediately begin to bleat longingly, and their mothers answer them, until the shepherd lets them come together. When the flock is composed of both goats and sheep, the shepherd prefers to separate them during the night; and he puts the goats on one side of the fold and the sheep on the other.

The admittance of the sheep to the fold is an interesting sight. The fold has but one entrance, which faces the east. It has no door, but only hedges and thorns which are placed there to block the way. The shepherd pushes these bushes aside, and stands among them. As he sways his body from side to side, one sheep at a time is allowed to enter. He uses his staff to number and distinguish them from one another. Some-

The Twenty-third Psalm 111

times he is seen bending down to lift a lamb upon his arm, saying: "Poor lamb, what is the matter with you? Ah, you are sick." To another he says: "Poor sheep! you are wounded; you had better stay on this side." Then, as another passes in, "You are all right," he says; and in this way the shepherd easily numbers his sheep, detects the sick ones, and misses the lost. Christ, no doubt, had seen this act of the shepherd, and was so impressed by it that it was in His mind when He said, "I am the door of the sheep."

Thank God! we have a Door not made of wood or stone, a Living Door, a Door that has hands stretched forth to help us, that has loving eyes to number us and study our needs, a Door that has a sympathetic heart to feel with us when we are in sorrow.

XIV.

*"Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup
runneth over."*

THE word "shemen," translated into English as "oil," really means Oriental butter, which is well known in all the Orient by the similar Arabic word "semen," and which all shepherds use as a remedy for their sick sheep. After admitting all his flock into the sheepfold, the shepherd cares for the sick sheep. He runs the "shemen," or butter, out of his horn and rubs their heads with it. If he is short of "shemen," he usually uses olive oil; sometimes he takes cedar tar out of his leather bag and applies it to the wounds and scratches

The Twenty-third Psalm 113

which they have received ; then with his brass cup, or "tassy," he gives them water to drink. "Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over."

The life of the shepherd among the flowers and plants makes him the best physician for animals. **Shepherd**
Many of the herbs which **as**
are now used as medicines **Physician**
trace their origin to the shepherds, who first discovered their medicinal value. The shepherd is also an expert in treating fractures and dislocations. When I was a boy I broke my arm, and the shepherd was the surgeon whom my parents summoned to set it.

The shepherd's life is not settled in one place or the other—he is always wandering. When **Shepherd's**
the winter season draws **Wander-**
nigh, he starts for the south- **ings**
ern lowland called "Nejb" or "Sahil,"

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where verdure is found in abundance, and where his flock escapes the snow and the cold weather of the mountains. But when the three months of winter pass and the heat becomes insufferable in the "Sahil," he is compelled to go northward with his flock to the mountains or high places called "Nejd" or "Jird," where the green grass begins to show out in the fields. Therefore the shepherd is constantly on the move between the Nejd and Jird, seeking the green pastures wherever they may be found. Joseph had a hard time in finding his brothers who were wandering with the flocks; he sought them in Hebron and then in Shechem, but failed to find them until a man who saw him wandering directed him to Dothan, where at last he found them. Shepherds are always more solicitous for the safety and comfort of their sheep than they are for their own,

The Twenty-third Psalm 115

no matter how much it may cost them of toil and hardship.

We could condense the hardships of the shepherd by quoting the words of Jacob: "And Jacob was **Shepherd's** wroth and chode with **La- Hardships** ban. . . . This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of the beasts, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." (Gen. xxi. 38-40.) Nevertheless, though the life of the shepherd is hard and difficult, he enjoys it.

•

XV.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in
the house of the Lord forever."*

THE goodness and mercy of the Great Shepherd are displayed wonderfully while He is watching over his sheep in the night time, as well as when He leads them by day, and restores their soul in time of need. His grace is shown to them in finding streams or wells of water, and His goodness in leading them by safe roads, even through that dark valley of the shadow of death.

The shepherd who sacrifices the flower-days of his life in order to give care and comfort and help to

The Twenty-third Psalm 117

his sheep ; he who lives and travels with, and is rarely separated from, his flock, whether in danger or in safety, in light or in darkness, in cold or in drought ; he who makes no distinction between white and black sheep, between the old and the young, the new-comers and the old pets,—that shepherd ought certainly to be loved by his flock. And we, as Christian people, ought continually to call the attention of the whole world to just such a Shepherd—that Good and Great Shepherd who is Christ our Lord ; who in all His works and deeds has proved Himself to be a Prince and a King among shepherds, and who has taught all His shepherds to follow His example.

Happy indeed will be the day when all white, black, and yellow sheep, with their leaders, shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever, and there shall be one Shepherd and one flock !

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And now we come to the last picture of our Shepherd's life on earth. The first scene of His earthly life was connected with shepherds watching their flocks; one of its latest scenes is the Good Shepherd taking loving thought of His flock.

Addressing Simon Peter, He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter answers, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"; and Christ, the Good Shepherd, looking far on into the future and seeing His dear, bleating lambs passing one by one before Him, says, "Feed my lambs." Again he says to Peter the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and again Peter answers, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"; and Christ responds, "Feed my sheep." Once more, the third time, with eyes deep, loving, pathetic, Jesus says to His wondering disci-

The Twenty-third Psalm 119

ple, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Then Peter, remembering that three times he had denied his Master, is sorely grieved. Rising to his feet and bowing his head in love and sorrow, out of his deepest heart spring the words, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

God grant that each one of us, rising to our feet and bowing our heads in love and reverence, may ever cry from our hearts, with David and Peter: "The Lord is my Shepherd.—Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

AIN-ZEHALTA was my home, a town in the heart of Mount Lebanon, and very close to the famous cedars, where my father lived, and where for thirty-three years he was a Protestant minister. He was converted through reading a Bible which he had plundered from one of the Druses against whom he was fighting. This Druse was using the leaves of the Bible for cartridges. Though some pages were torn out, my father carried that Bible home as his lawful booty, and read it again and again. He began to find that, though he was a deacon in the Greek Church, and his father was a priest of the Greek Church,

THE SYRIAN SHEPHERD AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN

The Twenty-third Psalm 121

his conception of Christianity was a wrong one; and he became troubled in his mind concerning the truth. He read of one Mediator between God and men, of one Fountain and one Salvation. At last through instructions received from the Rev. Drs. Calhoun and Smith, two of the first missionaries to Syria, he became converted, and was ordained minister in Ain-zehalta over the first church that was built in Mount Lebanon since the days of the Apostles.

He educated all his children in the American missionary schools. Three of us are graduates of the Syrian Protestant College at Beyrout, from which college I received my two diplomas, one from the collegiate department and one from the Theological Seminary.

I was born in the land in which Jesus Christ was born. My mother wrapped me in swaddling clothes

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as He was wrapped, and probably nursed and cared for me in the same manner that Mary nursed and cared for our Lord. I have walked upon the same roads that Jesus' feet have trod. I have seen the same hills, the same mountains and valleys that Jesus' eyes saw. I lived according to Oriental customs and manners, and I wore the same costumes that were worn at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Because of the survival among us of ancient customs and manners, we Orientals read and understand the Bible more clearly than any other people. It is explained and illustrated by what we see around us every day, so that it is easy for us to feel that it is true in every sense. There is no doubt of its trustworthiness.

In my early life I followed the occupation of a shepherd. My father owned a number of sheep and lambs;

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it is customary for all the people of Mount Lebanon to keep a few sheep. As a boy I was very proud to be the shepherd of my father's flock ; therefore in reading the previous story of the life of the shepherds of Palestine you may be sure that it comes from a man who was one of them himself, and went through an experience that brought him into close touch with the rich treasures of David's psalm.

Moreover my heart was touched strongly by its beauty when my father called me to his deathbed to read it to him once more. It had been his greatest comfort in the days of his persecution ; in the days when, for the sake of his Saviour, he was excommunicated, separated from his family, expelled from his home, and forced to take refuge in a Druse house. It was to his heart like the balm of Gilead to his wounds. When I began to read it by his bedside,—

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“Ul-Rubb-Raiyya,” “The Lord is my shepherd,” I beheld the tears dropping on his cheeks, and mine started immediately. He looked at me and tried to raise himself, but his strength failed him and he could only say, “May the Good Shepherd be always yours as He has been mine.” He then closed his eyes and passed away to meet his Shepherd in heaven.

When I came to America I began lecturing on the life of Palestine in general, but I soon found that what interested my audiences most was the shepherd life. I have seen many tears fall and many souls cheered by my exposition of the “Shepherd Psalm.” And the more I lectured upon it, the more I came to see the stones of beauty in its structure, the more I came to understand and catch the deeper sweetness of its melody as it flowed from David’s harp. The varied questions asked by my hearers

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were often valuable suggestions, without which I might have overlooked many important points.

Furthermore, the circumstances in which I was placed wonderfully assisted my comprehension of the psalm. Travelling alone in this country made me feel intensely the bitterness of being a stranger in a foreign land. I was cast on the mercy of the people whom I met. Some treated me kindly and made me welcome in their homes; others shut their doors in my face; but in both experiences I seemed to see the words of this psalm shine more brilliantly than ever before. So gradually by its means I came to know and taste the goodness of the Lord, and to feel at home in this blessed land of liberty.

It was during David's banishment from home and friends, when he had fled from the face of Saul to live in the caves of the mountains, that he

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came to sing from his heart, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." And still, sufferers of every name and condition, who can take His words on their lips, into their hearts, find rest and refreshment for their souls.

TO THE REV. MR. MOGHABGHAB

**SING on, O gentle shepherd,
Belovèd "Syrian Guest";
How well do we remember
That eve so richly blest,
When you in thought were roaming
Far in your native clime,
And to its ancient music
Our hearts were keeping time.**

**And while we read together
From Psalm the Twenty-third,
And you explained its meaning,
We treasured every word;
For you were once a shepherd,
And loved your flock to feed
In green and fragrant pastures,
And by still waters lead.**

**Sing on, O Syrian shepherd:
With eager hearts we look
And wait to hail the coming
Of your expected book.**